

## GREAT WORDS ABOUT SALVATION

### SALVATION Ephesians 2:8-10

What does it mean to be saved? This is a basic Biblical truth and teaching and yet there is probably no concept more misused and abused in non-Christian and even Christian circles. Quite often we will hear a Christian give his testimony and he will say, "I have been gloriously saved by Christ. He has taken all my sins away." Yet those who know this person realize that he is still very much a sinner and still very vulnerable to sin. Furthermore, how many of us have sung the rousing chorus, "Gone, gone, gone, gone, yes, my sins are gone! Now I'm free and in my heart's a song"? What do we mean when we say we have been saved and our sins are gone?

As Christians, we know from our experience that we are saved because Christ has done a great work for us and has invaded our lives, but do we understand doctrinally what has happened to us, and can we explain it in a simple way to others? We must never veer from the simplicity of the gospel.

### THE DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF SALVATION

The word "salvation" means "to deliver" or "to make safe." Therefore, salvation means that God delivers men from something and makes them safe in something.

The Bible declares dogmatically that salvation resides only in the person of Jesus Christ. "And there is salvation in no one else (Jesus Christ); for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me'" (John 14:6). If men are ever to be delivered and become safe, it can only be by, in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

The Bible states that salvation is always from sin, for Christ came into this world to save sinners. ". . . that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (I Tim. 1:15). Christ also came into this world to deliver His people from their sins. "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). What is sin? Sin is lawlessness. Sin is rebellion to God's moral law. Sin is acting independent of God. Sin not only includes the more gross and obvious sins such as drunkenness, drug addiction, premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexuality, stealing and so on, but also the more subtle sins such as greed, hate, envy, jealousy, gossip, pride and so forth. Sin spiritually separates men from God so that they are spiritually dead. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Sin is what stirs God's holy wrath and causes Him to exercise justice and cast men into hell.

Men need a Saviour. The word "Saviour" means a deliverer. The world needs a Saviour to deliver them from sin and the consequences of sin which is eternal punishment. "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Rom. 5:9). The great need of the world is for a sin-bearer not a joy-giver. Today, we hear so much about the need of men coming to Christ so He can give them joy, peace and happiness. Christ is presented as the great joy giver who helps men in their psychological problems. Christ is often preached as the Great Psychiatrist instead of the Great Physician who heals from sin. Do not misunderstand me, Christ does bring joy, peace and happiness to sinners who come to Christ. However, men lack joy peace and happiness because they are sinners and they need to be saved from their sin. It is possible for a person to come to Christ to get some kind of psychological joy, peace and happiness and never understand that they are sinners in great need of Christ's cleansing. People cannot be saved until they realize they are sinful and come to Christ as poor, humble sinners who need forgiveness and a new life from God.



The Bible also clearly teaches that salvation involves making a sinner who has fled to Christ safe from sin, Satan and hell. God declares that sin shall not rule over a true Christian. "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). He also has removed the believer positionally out of Satan's kingdom into Christ's kingdom. "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). Furthermore, God has made the Christian free from His wrath. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

## THE MEANS OF SALVATION

If it is true that salvation from sin, Satan and hell resides solely in Jesus Christ, then the next logical question is how can a person become saved. The scriptures declare over and over again that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). Once it was asked of the Apostle Paul by the Philippian jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" And he answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). Faith in Christ is accepting the fact that He died for our sins and entrusting ourselves to His care and keeping.

Salvation is appropriated through faith in Jesus Christ. Notice carefully the object of faith is Christ, not Buddha, not Confucius, not Moses, not any man or religious system but Christ. Salvation involves a personal commitment to the person of Jesus Christ.

Again I want to stress the importance of one's motive for trusting in Christ. The only true motive that will result in genuine salvation is that one sees himself a sinner in desperate need of cleansing. Quite often I hear preachers and evangelists say that if people will come to Christ, He will take away all their ills and pills. If they will trust Christ, He will solve all their problems. If they will believe in Christ, they will become more successful in business or on the athletic field or whatever. It may be true that if a person becomes a Christian, he will feel better physically (physical health is related to mental health and mental health to the freedom from guilt), and he will probably be able to cope with problems better, and he may become a better businessman and athlete, but these are all by-products of having come to Christ as a needy sinner.

Let us remember, too, that even Christians get sick and die; they have problems, and sometimes they do not always succeed, but they always have a God who loves them, who has cleansed them and who has promised them heaven's glory.

Only Christians can sing this song and mean it:

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Be saved to sin no more."

## THE THREE PHASES OF SALVATION

Usually when people talk about salvation, they talk in terms of when they first trusted Christ as Lord and Saviour. Quite often many Christians never advance much beyond that initial salvation experience because they do not know that trusting Christ begins the salvation process which will ultimately culminate in heaven. Initial salvation is just the beginning and not the ending. What people do not understand is that salvation encompasses the whole of one's life and all of eternity because salvation is past, present and future.

Just recently I heard of a young man who made a profession of faith in Christ. His decision was made on the minimal amount of knowledge. He went to another Christian to share his new decision for Christ. The older, more mature Christian said, "Howard, where do you go from here?" And the young man answered, "What else is there?"



Past Salvation. Salvation for us had a beginning. It began the very moment we trusted in Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour. ". . . by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:5). ". . . for by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). At a point in time, God delivered us judicially or positionally from our sins. We still were sinners but God made a declaration about our sins that they were gone as far as He was concerned because Christ bore our sins. God put our sins on Christ. In a moment of time, Christ put our sins behind Him, removed them as far as the east is from the west and put them at the bottom of the deepest sea.

When speaking of past salvation, we theologically say that Christ delivered us from the guilt and the penalty of sin. We stood condemned by a holy God and His wrath burned hot against us. We were under God's judicial penalty but Christ bore our penalty for us and we were delivered. We were also guilty before God. We were burdened, distraught and frustrated with the guilt of sin, but Christ cleansed us and lifted that burden, setting us free in Christ.

Do you remember when you were first saved and how you could breathe a sigh of relief because the guilt of your secret life of sin was forgiven by Christ. It was just as though a heavy weight was lifted off your soul. In that sense, your sins were gone, and you now can legitimately sing, "Gone, gone, gone, gone; yes, my sins are gone. Now I'm free and in my heart's a song." Your sins are gone judicially and positionally in Christ.

Present Salvation. Salvation for us began the moment we bent our rebellious wills to the sovereign Christ. Yet that was just the beginning. At the point of initial salvation, God began in us the salvation process. "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (II Cor. 2:15). Notice carefully we not only have been saved but we are being saved. God is working in our experience. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philip. 2:12,13). Daily, through every experience of life, God is saving us. God is delivering us from the power of sin in our experience. As Christians, we still have a sin nature, even though it has been positionally judged in Christ, and we need deliverance from sins in our daily life. We need a Saviour every day because sin is still such a powerful force in us. Each day we are being changed to conform more and more to the person of Jesus Christ. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:18). This is an experiential, continual and progressive process until we die or until Christ comes to get us at His second coming.

Christians can now claim with great confidence:

"I will not work, my soul to save  
For that my Lord has done,  
But I will work like any slave  
For love of His dear Son."

Future Salvation. Salvation is also ultimate and final. Salvation begun and continued will be culminated when the Christian in eternity will receive his new, redeemed body. "Who (Christians) are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:5). ". . . even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). The Christian then will be delivered from the presence of sin. He will become in actuality what God initially saved him to be. The Christian will be perfect - no more pain, no more suffering, no more lust, no more conflict with sin, no more tears. Oh, what glory that will be!

Conclusion. Now if anyone asks you if you are saved, you should answer, "Yes, I have been saved positionally from the penalty and guilt of sin; I am being saved from the power of sin in my experience, and I shall be saved from the presence of sin in heaven."



## THE WONDERS OF SALVATION

Salvation is so simple that the smallest child can grasp it, and yet salvation is so profound that the greatest minds and the most massive intellects cannot comprehend it at all. It is impossible to exhaust the depths of salvation because we are finite men trying to grasp the mind of an infinite God.

If we have been in Sunday School or around much good doctrinal teaching, we have probably heard that God, the Father purposed and planned our salvation; God, the Son, procured and secured our salvation and God, the Holy Spirit, applied our salvation. But what does all this mean? We are now going to speak about things that will boggle your mind and cause it to go "tilt." The question I want to ask you is, "When were you saved?"

Saved in the Eternal Counsels. Since God planned and purposed our salvation, He loved us in the eternal counsels and knew that we would be saved. "Just as He chose us (Christians) in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (II Thess. 2:13). There is a sense in which we were saved conceptually in the mind of God before the world began, for there is no past, present or future for God.

Saved at the Cross. Since Jesus Christ procured and secured our salvation, then we must have been in Christ when He died for sinners because the Bible says "Christ died for our sins" (I Cor. 15:3). Before we ever existed, Christ died in our place as a sinner's substitute. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). When Christ cried out from the cross, "It is finished!", He made a complete and perfect sacrifice for our sins. At that moment on the cross, Christ died for every sin we would ever commit - past, present and future. "Hence also He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him . . ." (Heb. 7:25). He died for us knowing all about our godless and sinful lives before conversion to Christ. He died for us knowing of all the sins we would do after conversion and how many times we would fail Him. Oh, what love! Oh, what grace! Oh, what mercy! Christ positionally saved us at the cross.

Saved at the Appointed Time. Since the Holy Spirit applied our salvation, we know it was sovereign love and grace that caused the Holy Spirit to convict, draw and regenerate us, enabling us to receive the Lord Jesus Christ when we were yet deep in our sins. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the work of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). "And He (the Holy Spirit) when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment" (Jn. 16:8). "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'" (Jn. 3:5). The Holy Spirit actually saved us at the appointed time.

Saved Experientially in Time. Even though salvation is a total work of the Trinity, this does not eliminate the necessity for a person to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No one will ever be saved in his experience until he trusts in Jesus Christ by an act of his own will. "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 10:9,10). "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

Conclusion. My friend, you may never come to completely understand salvation as it relates to the eternal plans and purposes of God, but you can understand that it is faith in Christ that brings salvation. Lay hold of this truth. Burn this truth deep into your mind. It is faith plus nothing in Christ that saves a sinner, and behind that faith is God's grace.

We experience the same bafflement that the hymn writer expressed in the song, "I Know Whom I Have Believed." In his experience he knew God had worked grace in his heart, but intellectually he had a hard time understanding it. He said,



"I know not how this saving faith  
To me He did impart,  
Nor how believing in His Word  
Wrought peace within my heart.

"I know not how the Spirit moves  
Convincing men of sin.  
Revealing Jesus thro' the Word,  
Creating faith in Him.

"But I know whom I have believed  
And am persuaded that He is able  
To keep that which I've committed  
Unto Him against that day."

## THE CAUSE OF SALVATION

Bible. The Bible is clear that God is the cause of our salvation. Jonah in the Old Testament made a prophetic utterance when he said, "Salvation is from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). The New Testament clearly teaches that God is the first cause in our salvation. "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philip. 1:6). "God who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (II Tim. 1:9). It is God's pure, free grace that has caused our salvation to come to pass. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). It is God and God alone who gets all the glory for our salvation. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

Experience. As Christians we may have a difficult time understanding how God is the first cause in our salvation and yet at the same time understand how we had to make a decision for Christ in order to be saved. Admittedly, this is difficult to understand and it is one of the great mysteries of the Bible. There are some Christians who never seem to intellectually accept the fact that God is the author of their salvation. They stumble over the doctrine and theology of God's sovereign purposes and often miss the blessing of grasping something of God's full and free grace. These dear ones will never appreciate their salvation as they could if they understood sovereign grace. However, I contend that in their experience all Christians do know that God is the author and finisher of salvation. All Christians have a practice better than their theology, and a heart for God better than a head of doctrine. God is the author and finisher of their faith whether they understand it intellectually or not.

First of all, every Christian thanks God for his salvation. The reason the Christian gives thanks is because he knows deep in his heart that God was and is responsible for his salvation. He knows that his salvation was not by chance or accident. His experience tells him that God worked in him before he came to Christ. After he comes to Christ, he now gives God thanks for working grace in his heart.

Second, all Christians know God is the author of salvation because they pray for the conversion of others. Men do not pray for God to bring lost men part way to salvation so man can come the rest of the way. No! All Christians pray, "God save sinners!" They all experientially know that God must open their eyes of understanding, soften their hard hearts and turn their stubborn wills if they are to be saved. On our knees, all Christians believe in God's sovereign purposes to save men. The problem is that when we get up off our knees and put down on a piece of paper just what we prayed, then some Christians become confused about allowing a sovereign God to do what He pleases.

J. I Packer in his excellent book Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God makes a profound statement. He says,



The situation is not what it seems to be. For it is not true that some Christians believe in divine sovereignty while others hold an opposite view. What is true is that all Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it. What causes this odd state of affairs? The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the Church--the intruding of rationalistic speculations, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to recognize the existence of mystery and to let God be wiser than men, and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of logic.

## CONCLUSION

Are you saved? Do you need to have the guilt of your sin removed? Do you feel you are under God's penalty for sin, and if you should die today, you would be judged by a wrathful God? Do you struggle with sin that always seems to gain the mastery over you? My friend, you need to be saved. You need Christ who alone can save you.

The greatest question that can ever be asked is, "What must I do to be saved? And God's answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

You still may ask the question, "How do I know that a sovereign God will save me if I do come to Christ?" God says He desires for men to be saved. "Who (God) desires all men to be saved? (I Tim. 2:4). Furthermore, Christ said He is seeking men to be saved, for He is anxious for men to respond to Him. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10). God has promised to save all who will come to Christ in simple faith. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn. 3:36). God cannot lie and God cannot go back on His word. God will not turn away one sinner who genuinely turns to Jesus Christ for salvation. God is faithful. Will you now rest upon His faithfulness and trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?

### If I Lost Him

"If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour,  
Is my life worth living for a day?  
Could my yearning heart find rest and comfort  
In the things that soon must pass away?  
If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour,  
Would my gain be worth the life-long strife?  
Are all earthly pleasures worth comparing,  
For a moment, with a Christ-filled life?

"Had I wealth and love in fullest measure,  
And a name revered both far and near?  
Yet no hope beyond, no harbor waiting  
Where my storm-tossed vessel I could steer;  
If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour,  
Who endured the Cross and died for me,  
Could then all the world afford a refuge,  
Wither, in my anguish, I might flee?

"Oh, what emptiness! -- without the blessed Saviour,  
'Mid the sins and sorrows here below!  
And eternity, how dark without Him!  
Only night and tears and endless woe!  
What tho' I might live without the Saviour,  
When I come to die, how would it be?

Oh, to face the valley's gloom without Him!  
And without Him, through all eternity!

"Oh, the joy of having all in Jesus!  
What a balm the broken heart to heal!  
Ne'er a sin so great, but He'll forgive it,  
Nor a sorrow that He does not feel!  
If I have but Jesus, only Jesus,  
Nothing else in all the world beside --  
Oh, then everything is mine in Jesus:  
For my needs, and more, He will provide."